United Nations E/AC.51/1999/L.6/Add.2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
29 June 1999

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Thirty-ninth session
7 June–2 July 1999

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Juichi **Takahara** (Japan)

Programme questions: programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1996–1997 (item 4 (a) (i))

Report of the Secretary-General on ways in which the full implementation and the quality of mandated programmes and activities could be ensured and could be better assessed by and reported to Member States

1. At its 14th meeting on 15 June 1999, the Committee considered the report of the Secretary-General on ways in which the full implementation and the quality of mandated programmes and activities could be ensured and better assessed by and reported to Member States (A/54/117).

2. The representative of the Secretary-General introduced the report and responded to questions raised during the Committee's consideration of the report.

Discussion

3. The view was expressed that the report was written in a vacuum, as if no rules and regulations existed in the Organization and that the recommendations and conclusions were not in conformity with the existing regulations and rules and established procedures. It was also expressed that the report was an attempt to invent something totally new and create the impression that results-based budgeting and time-limited initiatives were a panacea to the request in the General Assembly resolution 53/207 of 18 December 1998.

99-19113 (E) 290699

4. The view was expressed that the report overemphasized concepts like results-based budgeting and time-limited initiatives, which are still under consideration by the General Assembly. The report should not have made an attempt to influence or prejudge the outcome of General Assembly deliberation on such politically controversial and complex issues.

5. Concern was expressed that the report did not make a single recommendation and completely ignored the request by the General Assembly in resolution 53/207 regarding ways to ensure full implementation of all mandated programmes. In this regard, the view was also expressed that the report should have given consideration to:

(a) The question of resources;

(b) Accountability and responsibility of programme managers for better programme delivery;

(c) Incentives and disincentives for programme managers;

(d) Measures to deal effectively with under performance;

(e) Improvement in the internal guidelines for evaluation.

6. The view was expressed that the report should be rewritten to fully take into account the request by the General Assembly in resolution 53/207 and to bring it in conformity with the regulations and rules.

7. The view was expressed that the report was prepared in response to concerns raised during the discussion of the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its thirty-eighth session on the need to place more emphasis on qualitative analysis in future performance reports to reflect achievements in implementing programme activities.

8. Concern was expressed that there was no direct linkage between the medium-term plan and the budget and efficiency in monitoring programmes. Because of the political nature of the United Nations and the complexity and diversity of activities carried out by the Organization, assessment of the quality of programmes could not be strictly related to the achievement of outputs in the context of the budget.

9. Although concerns were expressed that the report was highly theoretical, there were also views that it served as a useful catalyst in enabling Member States to move forward in the debate to seek ways to better assess the quality of implemented programmes.

10. The view was expressed that the options proposed in the report merited discussion and consideration. The view was expressed that option one was desirable but needed to be studied more carefully because it might pose a problem in scheduling the review process. The view was also expressed that the recommendation in paragraph 37 was not practicable because it would further delay the consideration of reports, as intergovernmental bodies may be meeting at different times. As a result, the evaluation would never come to an end. Option two would have contributed to enhancing accountability of programme delivery, but might unduly complicate the work of the Committee for Programme and Coordination. The view was also expressed that paragraph 38 was an attempt to introduce results-based budgeting. The programme performance report should not be considered with budget proposals. The proposals on the budget should reflect resources for full implementation of all mandated programmes and activities. The view was expressed that option three more directly addressed the problem of assessing the full implementation and quality of mandated programmes and activities. Furthermore, option three offered better prospects for meeting the objectives of the framework of the revised Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, which call for the identification of expected accomplishments

in programme budget proposals. It was pointed out that the increase in detail in the programme budget, as called for by this option, would be an added advantage, as it would assist Member States in assessing the extent to which programmes had attained objectives. There was concern that the third proposal was related to proposals by the Secretariat on results-based budgeting, which had not yet been approved by the General Assembly.

11. Concern was expressed about the difficulty of applying the proposed concepts in the United Nations, especially the difficulty of relating outputs and intended outcomes. The quality of an output should not only be judged in terms of achieving outcomes or objectives. It was stressed that the Secretariat should be more vigilant in implementing self-evaluations, including the determination of the quality of implemented outputs by end-users. It was also pointed out that the quality of planning in the medium-term plan should not be used as an excuse for the lack of qualitative assessment measures. In this connection, it was stressed that it was incumbent upon the Secretariat to indicate what it could accomplish within a given biennial period in the delivery of outputs.

12. The view was expressed that the discussions should not ignore the uniqueness of the United Nations as an international organization that is characterized by multi-cultural and geopolitical differences. The view was expressed that proposals to improve the qualitative assessment of implemented outputs should take into consideration the current Regulations Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation and the fact that the United Nations is neither a Government nor a private organization. However, despite the uniqueness of the United Nations, the Secretariat should be open to various management practices and approaches to enable it to learn from the experiences of other organizations. Views were expressed that meanwhile study should continue to determine a set of norms for self-evaluation and evaluation of programmes and specific outputs. In view of the importance of seeking ways to better assess implemented outputs, the Committee emphasized that it was essential to focus on the merits of the proposals made in the report, bearing in mind that the long-term goal of the Organization should be to ensure that its implemented outputs add value.

13. The Committee acknowledged that the subject of the report was of a complex nature and therefore a prudent approach, in further consideration of the three options, was called for.

14. The view was expressed that a prototype of the proposed options should be provided by the Secretariat and that the subject should further stimulate dialogue within the Administrative Committee on Coordination on quality norms and standards.

Conclusions and recommendations

15. The Committee recommended that the Secretary-General be requested to further explore ways in which the full implementation of mandates could be ensured and better assessed according to the request in resolution 53/207, taking into account the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, and budgetary procedures, and giving due consideration to the views of Member States, and report thereon to the Committee at its fortieth session.